



SAFE@HOME

2019 - 2024

Strategic
Improvement Plan

mdcps 
Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services

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MDCPS Vision for Mississippi's Future

Mississippi's Statewide Vision and Mission

The 2016 Mississippi Legislature created the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services and empowered it to develop, execute, and provide programs to protect and serve Mississippi's children and their families. MDCPS's five-year Strategic Improvement Plan is an essential component of the Mississippi Legislature's statewide strategic plan which "envision[s] a lean and effective Mississippi state government that empowers its people to live healthy, productive lives through the provision of quality, appropriate services and strategic investment in the state's human capital. Through this empowerment, our state's citizens will experience a better quality of life than the generation before them and will leave their individual communities better for the generation that follows."¹

To bring this vision to life, "the State of Mississippi provides quality and appropriate services to its citizenry guided by the principles of: preserving the liberty of all citizens by providing the least intrusive state government; practicing accountability and transparency at every level of government; and, placing ultimate value on efficiency and effectiveness of government service to taxpayers and citizens." In the human services arena, the State's focus is "to ensure that Mississippians are able to develop to their full potential by having their basic needs met, including the need for adequate food and shelter and a healthy, stable, and nurturing family environment or a competent and caring system of social support."

MDCPS's Mission and Vision

We, as Mississippi's primary child welfare agency, believe Mississippi's children should grow up in strong families, safe from harm and supported through partnerships that promote family stability and permanency. Our mission is to lead Mississippi's efforts in keeping children and youth safe and thriving by: strengthening families; preventing child abuse, neglect, and exploitation; and promoting child and family well-being and permanent family connections.

Our Philosophy of Practice

We believe neither government nor other social institutions can ever fully replace a child's family. We know that Mississippi's children and families will thrive when parents are supported, prepared, and equipped to raise their own children in a safe, loving, and protective environment without unnecessary government intrusion. To that end, our philosophy—Safe at Home—recognizes that removing children from their families and placing them in foster care should be an intervention of last resort, and that the first and greatest investment of our time and resources should be to protect and safely care for children in their own homes. With the appropriate investment of short-term services and intensive supports designed to strengthen families, even those who experience temporary family disruption can reach sustainable, long-term familial safety and stability. We can avoid unnecessary

¹ "Building a Better Mississippi," the statewide strategic plan for Mississippi's state government.

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family separation and out-of-home placement, thereby safely reducing additional trauma to children and families.

We also recognize that sometimes children cannot safely remain in their own homes because of eminent or actual danger. When that is the case, it is our responsibility to take immediate steps to protect and care for those children while simultaneously and vigorously working toward timely reunification with their families whenever safely possible. When removal is unavoidable, we believe that we must make immediate efforts to provide appropriate services and supports to strengthen parental capacities, heal broken relationships, and reunify families, to ensure that foster care works as a restorative support to families and not as a replacement for them.

There will be cases, however, where reunification cannot be achieved. In such cases, we work through Mississippi's youth court system to develop and assure timely completion of other permanent plans including custody with a relative, adoption, durable legal custody/guardianship, or a successful transition to independence. While reunification is preferred, all children deserve lasting permanency whether reunification is achievable or not. It is our responsibility to ensure that permanency for every child is achieved.

Overall, we work to empower families and encourage self-sufficiency while meeting children's needs for safety and wellbeing and achieving timely permanency. Our philosophy recognizes that Mississippi cannot achieve sustainable, long-term child and family wellbeing and permanent family connections simply by operating a foster care system in which government raises children in lieu of their families. Rather, long-term wellbeing for children and families can be achieved only by ensuring that foster care is one tool in a much broader child welfare system which seeks to preserve families whenever possible.

Key to this are our statewide partnerships with community connections, law enforcement, service providers, other state agencies, and courts. These partnerships are essential to the safety, well-being, and permanency of all Mississippi families. While MDCPS is an executive branch agency, we work closely with our statewide system of youth courts to provide a safety net for abused, neglected, and exploited children. This safety net is particularly critical when children are removed and placed into state custody. Immediate and diligent efforts must be made to place children and/or sibling groups with other relatives, if possible, or with licensed foster families which can maintain the children and/or sibling groups in their own schools and communities. The goal is to minimize trauma to the children and birth families as much as possible. In these situations, families can best be supported by a strong safety network, extended families and community support. Frontline staff and other partnerships supporting them are leading agents of positive change in the lives of these children, youth, and families.

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Our Measures of Success

Every system ultimately is judged by whether it achieves the outcomes it is designed to achieve. While it is important that MDCPS has a clear mission and philosophy to guide our work, we must be able to measure progress towards the vision we pursue. Our outcome measures are the quantitative demonstration of how frequently and how well we achieve our desired ends.²

Safety: Mississippi's children will be free from abuse and neglect.

We work to protect Mississippi's children from abuse and neglect, ensuring their safety and wellbeing by partnering with families, communities, and other government entities in an ethically, culturally, and socially responsible manner. We have the statutory responsibility to investigate all reports of child abuse and neglect. Our statutory mission is, in this respect, reactive. But we also provide support to the State's larger efforts to prevent abuse and neglect from ever occurring and we hold primary responsibility for ensuring that no abused or neglected child suffers through another episode of maltreatment.

To accomplish this, we must: 1) determine whether the facts reported to us meet the statutory definition of abuse or neglect; 2) conduct timely and accurate investigations of those that do to determine whether we can substantiate the reported allegations of abuse and neglect; and, 3) make reliable and well supported recommendations to youth court judges and referees regarding whether a child must be removed from a home, or can be safely maintained at home with in-home services. For the children who must be removed from their homes, we must develop and maintain safe, viable placement options by ensuring that we effectively enforce our licensure standards for relatives, foster parents, and facilities. Finally, we must deliver effective services, whether in the children's homes or while they are in foster care, to ensure their parents are equipped to parent their children without future MDCPS involvement.

We use two outcomes measures to determine our success in keeping Mississippi's children safe:

Measure	Baseline	Improvement Target
The number of substantiated victims of child maltreatment per ten thousand in the population.	11.6 ³	2% Reduction Annually
The rate of reoccurrence of child maltreatment within six months after MDCPS involvement.	6.8% ⁴	2% Reduction Annually

Stability: Mississippi's children will be free from unnecessary disruption and the trauma it inflicts.

While we effectively respond to instances of child maltreatment, we must ensure that we do not compound the trauma the children already have experienced by causing unnecessary disruption to

² Each outcome measure consists of a baseline—current performance—and a performance target—our goal for improvement going forward.

³ October 2017–September 2018

⁴ October 2017–September 2018

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their lives. First and foremost, we limit disruption for children by preventing every unnecessary removal through the delivery of effective in-home services. Second, we work to maintain every possible connection for children who must be removed from their homes. Our priority is to license relatives to care for children rather than place children into a foster home or congregate facility. We work to place siblings together if possible to do so safely. We make every effort to place children close to their homes, so they can maintain connections to friends, schools, and other familiar sources of social structure and stability. Finally, when children must be separated from their parents or siblings, we ensure frequent, quality visitation to maintain relational ties.

We use three outcomes measures to determine our success in providing stability for Mississippi's children:

Measure	Baseline	Improvement Target
The percentage of substantiated victims of maltreatment removed to foster care.	18.5% ⁵	2% Reduction Annually
The percentage of non-removed substantiated victims of maltreatment revictimized within six months.	7.5% ⁶	2% Reduction Annually
The number of placement moves per one thousand child days.	3.7 ⁷	2% Reduction Annually

Permanency: Mississippi's children will have safe and lasting permanent family connections.

Our goal is not for the State of Mississippi to raise children, but to equip parents to raise their own children. We succeed when Mississippi children are secure and protected in sustainable and supported permanent family environments. Whenever possible, our priority is for children to be safely maintained in their own home, without disrupting their existing living arrangement. But for children where removal is necessary to protect their safety, we make every effort to provide families the help they need to bring their children safely home and properly raise them after our involvement ends. Our goal is not only to reunify families but also to minimize the duration of family separation. Our work focuses on timely and lasting permanency for all children.

We work to strengthen Mississippi families by building on their strengths and addressing their needs through diligent efforts to connect children and families to service providers across a statewide safety net. Partnerships with other agencies and community partners facilitate the intervention needed to meet systemic challenges to family stability beyond abuse and neglect itself. We make the family the focus of our case planning, giving them ownership of their progress, and we work tirelessly to connect with them by developing a relationship of mutual trust and respect.

When reunification cannot be safely achieved, MDCPS makes every effort to achieve timely permanency through other permanent placement options. We seek relatives willing to provide permanent care to a child. We identify loving adoptive homes. And, for those older youth who have

⁵ October 2017–September 2018

⁶ October 2017–September 2018

⁷ April 2018–March 2019

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not been adopted or reunified, we ensure they are given the transition supports necessary to become healthy, productive, and self-sufficient adults.

We use four outcome measures to determine our success in achieving permanency for Mississippi's children:

Measure	Baseline	Improvement Target
The percentage of children exiting custody who were reunified within 12 months of entering custody.	64% ⁸	2% Increase Annually
The percentage of children exiting custody who were adopted within 24 months of entering custody.	78% ⁹	2% Increase Annually
The percentage of children exiting custody who exited to reunification.	51% ¹⁰	2% Increase Annually
The number children reentering custody.	381 ¹¹	2% Reduction Annually

Wellbeing: Mississippi's children will live healthy, supported, and productive lives.

Our work to ensure safety, stability, and permanency for Mississippi's children is not done for those ends alone. We recognize that every person's long-term wellbeing depends greatly upon the degree of safety, stability, and permanency they experience in childhood. We likewise recognize the long-term impact of unaddressed childhood trauma. So, we understand that the outcome measures for safety, stability, and permanency also are predictors of future wellbeing.

Children in Custody: Mississippi's foster care population will be no larger than necessary.

Finally, because we understand the trauma inflicted by removing children from their homes, we make every effort to prevent unnecessary removals to foster care. Because we know children need permanent connections, we make every effort to achieve rapid permanency for every child in foster care. These efforts work together to drive one other outcome measure: the number of children in foster care. While we do not set a specific target number for our foster care population, it is our goal that foster care functions as an intervention of last resort.

⁸ April 2018–March 2019

⁹ April 2018–March 2019

¹⁰ April 2018–March 2019

¹¹ April 2018–March 2019

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Our Improvement Initiatives

While our performance indicators track our day-to-day performance under existing practice, we also are responsible for seeking long-term mechanisms for systemwide improvement. Many are presently underway.

Family Engagement

Our Round 3 CFSR results and other data indicate that one barrier to achieving our Safe at Home outcomes is inadequate family engagement.

Comprehensive Organizational Health Assessment

We believe adequate family engagement comes first and foremost from an organizational culture committed to maintaining children safely in their homes whenever possible, and to persistent efforts towards reunification through relationships of mutual respect. To assess the prevalence of that organizational culture and develop targeted training to address any deficiencies, we are in the process of conducting a comprehensive organizational health assessment.

Strategy	Timetable/Benchmarks
Conduct an online survey of all MDCPS staff to assess the prevalence of Safe at Home cultural values as well as staff perception of support for their work.	The survey was issued online on May 14, 2019 and closed May 27, 2019 with 1,278 responses, a nearly 90% response rate.
Present the results of the online survey to supervisory staff at the annual leadership conference.	This presentation occurred June 6, 2019.
Craft focus group questions from the survey responses to further analyze the Safe at Home culture and identify necessary next steps in moving that culture forward.	A draft was received on June 26, 2019. That same day, the draft questions were distributed to the review team. Feedback was received by July 12, 2019. Questions were finalized July 17, 2019.
Conduct five focus groups of MDCPS staff in Jackson, Oxford, Greenville, Gulfport, and Meridian.	Focus groups are planned for the five Thursdays in August 2019.
Prepare a preliminary report on the focus group results, identifying any immediate response needed.	The report will be prepared by the end of September 2019.
Develop a targeted plan to address identified weaknesses in organizational culture.	Training plan will be developed by the end of October 2019.
Plan external stakeholder surveys and focus groups with questions crafted based on the survey and focus group responses.	Completion targeted by the end of 2019.
Develop schedule and process for ongoing cultural assessment through periodic surveys	Plan development to be completed by the end of 2019.

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and focus groups of staff and external stakeholders.	
Refine cultural improvement plan based on external stakeholder feedback.	Completion targeted by the end of January 2020.

Practice Model Learning Cycle

In addition to fostering the right organizational culture, we recognize that staff must be equipped with the skills to foster effective family engagement. To that end, we have developed the family-centric and trauma-informed Mississippi Practice Model. The Practice Model focuses on six core concepts, one of which is “Involving Children and Families.” The Practice Model Learning Cycle (PMLC) is our effort to roll out that practice model statewide.

Strategy	Timetable/Benchmarks
Conduct first round of the PMLC in Regions I-N, I-S, II-W, III-N, III-S, IV-N, and V-W.	Completed November 15, 2017.
Conduct second round of the PMLC in Regions II-E, V-E, and VII-W.	Completed in November 15, 2018.
Conduct third round of the PMLC in Regions IV-S, VI, VII-C, and VII-E.	Currently underway and will be completed by November 15, 2019.
Develop plan for continued PMLC education after all regions have completed the learning cycle, targeting areas of weakness.	Will be completed before the completion of the current round of the PMLC on November 15, 2019.

Complete and Accurate Assessments

Our Round 3 CFSR also identified needed improvement in the quality of risk, safety, and family needs assessment. Our ability to make reliable decisions regarding removal and to deliver necessary services depends upon complete and accurate assessments.

Practice Model Learning Cycle

Two of the Practice Model Core Concepts focus on assessment: “Safety Assurance and Risk Management” and “Strengths and Needs Assessment of Children and Families.”

Strategy	Timetable/Benchmarks
Conduct first round of the PMLC in Regions I-N, I-S, II-W, III-N, III-S, IV-N, and V-W.	Completed November 15, 2017.
Conduct second round of the PMLC in Regions II-E, V-E, and VII-W.	Completed in November 15, 2018.
Conduct third round of the PMLC in Regions IV-S, VI, VII-C, and VII-E.	Currently underway and will be completed by November 15, 2019.

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Develop plan for continued PMLC education after all regions have completed the learning cycle, targeting areas of weakness.	Will be completed before the completion of the current round of the PMLC on November 15, 2019.
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New Assessment Tools & Revised Training on Assessments

Staff's ability to perform complete and accurate assessments depends first and foremost on the reliability of the assessment tools used, as well as the staff's competence to administer those tools. So, we have begun work to evaluate the quality of our assessment tools and the need for additional training on assessments.

Strategy	Timetables/Benchmarks
Evaluate risk and safety and family needs assessment tools utilized by other states and determine whether more reliable tools exist than those currently in use.	A MDCPS workgroup, with technical assistance from a contractor, has begun this evaluation. The feedback of an experienced Mississippi youth court judge has been requested. The workgroup will provide a recommendation by the end of September 2019. MDCPS executive leadership then will determine whether to procure a new tool.
If MDCPS chooses to procure a new tool, the workgroup will develop requirements for the tool.	To be developed by the end of October 2019.
If MDCPS procures a new tool, MDCPS will develop a training plan for tool roll out, including preservice training, online training, and coaching.	To be developed within 60 days of completed procurement and any necessary period of train the trainer.
If the evaluation team and MDCPS executive leadership determine that a new tool is not appropriate, a training plan—including preservice training, online training, and coaching—will be developed and implemented to improve caseworkers use of the existing tools.	To be developed within 60 days of the determination that MDCPS will not proceed with the procurement of a new tool.

Revise Mississippi Centralized Intake Screening and Referral Processes

In addition to the assessments performed by frontline staff in the field, our data suggests that processes for screening reports made to Mississippi Centralized Intake (MCI) can be improved. Presently, our rate of screened-in reports is high, while the rate of substantiation is low. This suggests a more effective screening process and alternative response could improve efficiency.

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Strategy	Timetable/Benchmarks
Develop alternative response for implementation of Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act requirements for response substance-affected infants.	Partnership with Mississippi Department of Mental Health, Mississippi Department of Health, Families First for Mississippi, and Healthy Families Mississippi implemented in June 2018.
Perform a formal evaluation of MCI processes and performance.	A team of contract consultants completed this review on October 30, 2018.
Take greater control of day-to-day MCI operations by moving MCI from totally contracted out to a private agency to MDCPS employees providing direct management and supervision to contract call-answering staff.	A RFP for a new staffing contracting was issued July 8, 2019, with responses due August 1, 2019. MDCPS will hire supervisory staff to be in place by October 2019.
Evaluate alternative systems of screening and response.	A workgroup of MDCPS MCI and field operations staff will be organized once MDCPS has assumed management and supervision of MCI. Assessment to be completed during the first quarter of 2020.

Service Array

Effective family engagement and accurate assessment can achieve our desired outcomes only if they are followed by our delivery of the services families need. While we have experienced extraordinary success with our InCircle intensive in-home family preservation and reunifications services program, waitlists have developed for those services and efforts to increase their availability are needed.

Practice Model Learning Cycle

As with family engagement and assessment, the Mississippi Practice Model trains caseworkers to identify and access needed services with one of its core concepts: “Timely Mobilizing Appropriate Services.”

Strategy	Timetable/Benchmarks
Conduct first round of the PMLC in Regions I-N, I-S, II-W, III-N, III-S, IV-N, and V-W.	Completed November 15, 2017.
Conduct second round of the PMLC in Regions II-E, V-E, and VII-W.	Completed November 15, 2018.
Conduct third round of the PMLC in Regions IV-S, VI, VII-C, and VII-E.	Currently underway and will be completed by November 2019.
Develop plan for continued PMLC education after all regions have completed the learning cycle, targeting areas of weakness.	Will be completed before the completion of the current round of the PMLC on November 15, 2019.

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Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Implementation

The FFPSA will provide federal funding for intensive in-home services. But because this new federal law makes radical changes in how the federal government provides funding to child welfare agencies, the Children's Bureau has granted states up to two years from October 1, 2019, to implement its provisions. One effort to increase our service array is our work to implement the FFPSA as soon as reasonably possible.

Strategy	Timetable/Benchmarks
Educate Mississippi stakeholders on the Act's requirements.	MDCPS and MDHS leadership received training from national experts on October 29, 2018. National experts provided training to MDCPS congregate care providers on September 13, 2018. The Court Improvement Project has provided judicial training and will continue to do so. By the time of implementation, FFPSA content will be incorporated into all MDCPS's training phases.
Develop Mississippi's implementation plan.	MDCPS established dedicated project management staff in July 2019. Their first task is the development of an FFPSA implementation plan, which will phase in all the Act's requirements by October 1, 2021.

Diversifying Intensive In-home Services

We also are evaluating whether the FFPSA can increase the quantity of intensive in-home services available by diversifying the service array with programs that require less intensive staffing for families with less acute needs.

Strategy	Timelines/Benchmarks
Assess provider willingness to adopt less staffing-intensive programs to serve more families with existing resources.	Multiple providers have expressed a willingness to do so during 2019.
Procure various evidence-based intensive in-home services programs.	Procurement to be completed by FFPSA implementation on October 1, 2021.
Develop protocol or assessment for determining the appropriate referral among the pool of in-home services programs.	Protocol to be developed by FFPSA implementation October 1, 2021.
Train internal and external stakeholders on the new in-home services array.	MDCPS staff will be trained through the three-pronged training process: preservice, online, coaching. Externally, MDCPS will request that education on the new service array be

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	incorporated into the judicial training provided both by the Mississippi Judicial College and the AOC/CIP.
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Increase Awareness of Existing Services

We have several efforts underway to ensure that MDCPS staff are aware of and accessing all available services in the State.

Strategy	Timelines/Benchmarks
Development of Mississippi Association of Child Care Agencies (MACCA) service guide.	MACCA began work on comprehensive service guide in mid-2019. A completed guide is expected by the end of 2019. MDCPS leadership will meet with MACCA representatives in early August 2019 to review a draft of the guide.
Development of MDHS resource system.	MDHS has begun work on a computer database identifying all services of which the agency is aware. An expected date for rollout has not been determined.
Training by Families First for Mississippi on the service available through their resource centers.	Throughout 2019, MDCPS caseworkers have received this training.
Implementation of Families First Initiative service referral system.	During 2019, the Families First Initiative (FFI) has worked to implement a service referral system for local resources in certain pilot counties. We expect these local FFI teams to be expanded across the state, and to be an important source of service referrals to the MDHS resource system available for referrals by our caseworkers.

System Infrastructure

Several concerns related to system infrastructure have been identified through the CFSR and MDCPS strategic planning processes. Workforce challenges of an inadequate number of staff combined with caseworker turnover have impeded performance. Another identified barrier is inadequate standardization of MDCPS supervisory practice. MDCPS also has experienced challenges in the collection and reporting of data.

Workforce Development

MDCPS is working to improve its workforce through an increased quantity of staff, agency reorganization, and retention efforts to keep experienced staff.

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Strategy	Timetable/Benchmarks
Increase the number of MDCPS frontline, licensure, and adoption caseworkers.	Effective July 1, 2019, MDCPS will use increased state funding to lift restrictions on growing its workforce and will make every effort to fill each training class to capacity.
Increase the number of MDCPS supervisors.	For each five frontline, licensure, and adoption caseworkers added, MDCPS has budgeted to add an additional supervisor.
Continue efforts to improve retention of caseworkers and supervisors.	Employee surveys consistently have shown pay is a primary cause of staff attrition. All MDCPS staff received a 3% raise beginning July 1, 2019. MDCPS also will request funding in SFY 2021 to fund step raises for MDCPS employees tied to tenure with the agency. Survey data also shows stress in the workplace contributes to staff attrition. MDCPS's organizational health assessment, discussed above, serves as an effort to ensure issues of organizational culture do not contribute to staff attrition. Also, MDCPS's effort to improve supervisory support through weekly case staffing — discussed in the following chart — is designed to reduce employee stress by enhanced burden-sharing with supervisors.
Reorganize and increase State Office staff dedicated to long term improvement initiatives and performance reporting obligations.	In July 2019, MDCPS moved responsibility for its Offices of Licensure and Therapeutic and Prevention Services to the Deputy Commissioner of Child Welfare giving her responsibility for all units that deliver day-to-day services. In their place, Offices of Reporting and Project Management have been created under the Deputy Commissioner of Child Safety. These units solely have responsibility for reporting MDCPS's performance for Olivia Y, federal, state and other purposes; and for managing MDCPS's long-term improvement initiatives. Additional staff will be added for each unit early in SFY 2020.

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Effective Supervision

Because we understand that an employee's direct supervisor has the greatest impact on their performance, we have several initiatives underway to improve the quality of our supervisory workforce's leadership and supervision.

Strategy	Timetable/Benchmarks
Develop frontline, licensure, and adoption standardized case staffing tools.	An internal workgroup developed a standardized case staffing tool for frontline staff during the first half of 2019. The tool was presented to all supervisory staff during training session at our June 2019 leadership conference. Similar tools have been developed for our licensure and adoption units. Training on the tools will be incorporated into all three phases of our training program.
Reinforce practices of progressive discipline.	At our June 2019 leadership conference, all supervisors were trained on progressive discipline. We have implemented a four-tiered approach to staff discipline including coaching, verbal reprimands, written reprimands, and suspension/termination. Training on progressive discipline will be ongoing for our supervisory staff.
Implement enhanced leadership education.	We also have begun education on leadership as distinct practice from supervision or management. This content was provided to our supervisory staff at the June 2019 leadership conference and will be incorporated into our supervisory training going forward.

Increased Data Reporting Capacity

To improve our data collection and reporting, we have both long- and short-term solutions in progress.

Strategy	Timetable/Benchmarks
Develop and implement a Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS).	Using funding provided by the Legislature, we, by June 30, 2021, will replace our legacy data system MACWIS with a CCWIS-compliant system that improves caseworker efficiency in data entry and increases our capacity for data reporting. An Advanced Planning Document was submitted to the Children's Bureau June 30,

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	2019, to request federal funding for the project. An RFP also has been submitted to the Children's Bureau and State Department of Information Technology Services for approval. Planning, staffing, and procurement for the project already are underway, and development is expected to begin by the end of 2019.
Implement medical service survey for foster parents.	In January 2019, we created and issued an online survey that allows foster parents to report medical care they facilitate for children in MDCPS custody.
Increase access to Medicaid data.	During 2018, we worked with the Division of Medicaid to obtain claims data for children in our custody. Though the claims data proved unhelpful in providing needed documentation, we have had continued conversations with the Division of Medicaid to find alternative ways Medicaid data may assist our data collection.
Onboard contract resources to improve the quality of data reports.	In May 2019, we brought a contract programmer on board to begin rewriting our data reports for improved data quality. By August 2019, we expect to add an additional contract staff resource to supplement this work.
Implement a new Continuous Quality Improvement plan.	During 2018, we developed a continuous quality improvement plan that provides for increased qualitative case reviews around Olivia Y deliverables. That plan has been implemented for 2019 and is intended to institutionalize CQI activities throughout all functional areas of the agency.

Enhanced Financial Management

Many of the challenges we have experienced are related to funding and budgeting. To continue our improvement in financial management, we have worked to separate our budget in the state accounting system from that of MDHS.

Strategy	Timetable/Benchmarks
Separate MDCPS budget from MDHS budget in MAGIC, the state's accounting system.	This work occurred over the first half of 2019.

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Stakeholder Collaboration

While there are a great number of internal initiatives underway, we realize that our collaboration with external stakeholders also contributes to our success. To further that collaboration, several initiatives are underway.

Strategy	Timetable/Benchmarks
Engage the judiciary in collaborative training that advances the Safe at Home vision.	As part of the PMLC in Region VII-W during 2018, the Hancock County Youth Court was engaged in a judicially targeted version of the Learning Cycle. The success in reducing entries into foster care was substantial and immediate. So, during 2019, we have engaged similar efforts in several other courts including Harrison, Jackson, Jones, Lauderdale, Lamar, Forrest, and Stone counties. Going forward, we will pursue this model in other jurisdictions. We also have had staff in attendance at trainings held by the Administrative Office of Courts in 2018 and 2019, which will continue. Finally, we have presented at the 2017 and 2018 youth court judges' conferences hosted by the Mississippi Judicial College and will continue to do so.
Engage the judiciary to improve MDCPS's recovery of federal funds.	During 2018 and 2019, we have collaborated and worked with the Supreme Court and its Jurist-in-Residence to reduce the loss of federal funds to MDCPS due to insufficient or incorrect language in youth court orders.
Enhance primary prevention through support of the Family First Initiative.	While our statutory mission is primarily responsive to reports of abuse or neglect, we are supporting the efforts of the Family First Initiative to coordinate local efforts to provide resources necessary to prevent child maltreatment.
Increase foster parent engagement by establishing a foster parent liaison.	To increase our engagement with foster parents, and improve their retention, we have established a new state office position of Foster Parent Liaison. Beginning July 2019, the liaison will help facilitate foster parent support groups, hold foster parent town halls, respond to foster parent concerns, convene foster parent focus groups, and provide information for a monthly foster parent newsletter.

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Support state efforts to implement statewide parent representation.	For the past few years, MDCPS has been a part of the Mississippi Parent Representation Task Force, which has worked to implement statewide parent representation in youth court. We will continue to support this task force's work with the assistance of data production and through implementation of IV-E reimbursement for youth court attorneys.
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Our Performance Indicators

Performance indicators differ from outcome measures in that they do not measure the ultimate outcome of a system, but instead measure whether certain actions occur in the processes designed to lead to the intended outcomes. In other words, performance indicators measure the completion of tasks—the means—that contribute to the agency's ability to achieve its desired ends.

Our performance indicators are taken from two primary sources. First, we measure performance based on the measurement and assessment criteria set of the federal Child and Family Services Review and second, on performance measures identified in the 2nd Modified Settlement Agreement and Reform Plan in the Olivia Y litigation.

Hotlinks:

Children's Bureau – Child and Family Services Review criteria:

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/round3_procedures_manual.pdf

Olivia Y – 2nd Modified Settlement Agreement and Reform Plan:

<https://www.mdcps.ms.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Second-MSA.pdf>